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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2597

February 12, 1993

In testimony to the Senate Subcommittee on Agriculture Research, Conservation, Forestry and General Legislation, Secretary Mike Espy said the strategy USDA has developed to ensure the safety of meat and poultry products includes improvements in education, regulations, testing, enforcement, and research. USDA photo by Byron Schumaker.



TWO TRACK APPROACH -- Dr. H. Russell Cross, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, has presented to Secretary Espy a strategy to develop a new model for meat and poultry safety reform. The first track is designed to improve the current inspection system under present laws and regulations. In testimony to the Senate agriculture subcommittee on February 5, Cross said science, labor relations, and agency structure will be centerpieces of the Track I program. The second track is to develop a food safety program for the future. A Meat and Poultry Safety Summit has been proposed as a method of bringing together all parties interested in food safety to begin getting input for the content of Track II. **Contact: Dr. Jill Hollingsworth (202) 720-8911.**

TOP FIVE CO-OP STATES -- California, with \$8 billion in net sales, leads all States in volume of business handled by farmer cooperatives. The latest figures, released by USDA's Agricultural Cooperative Service, are for 1991. Wisconsin is second with \$6 billion in sales; followed by Minnesota, \$5.9 billion; Iowa, \$5.8 billion; and Illinois, \$4 billion. The five States account for 39% of the net business volume handled by all cooperatives. Minnesota has 422 cooperatives headquartered in the state, the largest number in any state. **Contact: Charles Kraenzle (202) 720-3189.**

GRAB THOSE LOW PRICES -- Consumers can take advantage of low prices in February on fresh grapefruit, oranges, tangerines, and frozen ready-to-drink orange and grapefruit juices. The citrus harvest has been bountiful. The fresh crop increased about 25 percent compared to last year's levels because Texas groves returned to production after the 1989 freeze. Juice has hit the lowest price in five years. Other cold-weather specials are canned and frozen vegetables as processors try to reduce inventories in preparation for spring crops. **Contact: Richard Edwards (409) 845-8694.**

CATFISH SALES HIGHER -- Catfish growers had sales of \$316 million during 1992, up 11 percent from a year earlier. But the number of catfish operations in 15 selected States was down 12 percent to 1,527. 151,860 water surface acres are in production, and an additional 1,010 acres are under construction. **Contact: Robert Little (202) 720-6147.**

LONG RANGE WEATHER OUTLOOK -- The outlook for precipitation through April calls for dry conditions in Washington, Oregon, and the northern portions of California, Idaho and Montana. Wet conditions will likely prevail in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and the northern half of Florida. Other regions of the nation should have near normal rainfall patterns. Temperature outlook through April calls for warm across the northern tier of states from Washington to Wisconsin. Colder temperatures are expected in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Mississippi. **Contact: Ray Motha (202) 720-9807.**

BE A TRAIL BOSS -- TRAIL Boss teaches volunteer leaders the specialized skills for training and leading volunteer crews involved in conservation projects. Teaching Resources And Individual Leadership (TRAIL) is a program of USDA's Soil Conservation Service open to adults from youth, conservation or volunteer organizations. It offers courses in administration, volunteer recruitment, program promotion, and hands-on skills development that improves the capabilities of volunteer leaders to organize conservation programs for organizations. **Contact: Thomas Levermann (202) 720-6475.**

WHOLE LOT OF POPPIN GOING ON -- Americans consume 16.5 billion quarts of popped popcorn annually, according to the Popcorn Institute. 70 percent of popcorn is eaten at home. Popcorn is no Johnny-come-lately. Archaeologists have found ears of popcorn in New Mexico that date back 5,600 years. Varieties of popcorn have silks that are toxic to earworms. USDA's Agricultural Research Service is studying the resistance to corn earworm, and transferring it to other varieties of corn. It's a goal that could produce beneficial results as more pesticides are taken off the market. **Contact: Richard Wilson (515) 294-8583.**

WHEN NOT TO REACH FOR THE BUG SPRAY -- "Never spray the woodpile," says Mike Merchant, an entomologist with the Extension Service in Dallas, TX. "The chemical can remain on the surface of the wood and produce a toxic vapor when burned, which could be irritating to the eyes and sinuses." To prevent bringing insects into the home in firewood, Merchant suggests stacking wood off the ground outside the home, keeping the woodpile dry, and storing firewood away from the house. **Contact: Mike Merchant (214) 231-5362.**

FOOD SAFETY -- Salmonellosis is one of the most common foodborne illnesses, causing nausea, vomiting, fever, diarrhea. It can be fatal to those with weakened immune systems. To combat it USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service recommends that raw meat be promptly refrigerated and stored for no more than 3 to 5 days; wash hands thoroughly before and after handling raw meat; use a plastic dishwasher-safe cutting board, not one of wood; wash with hot soapy water all utensils and surfaces that have come in contact with raw meat; don't place raw meat on the same plate later used for cooked meat; don't let juices from raw meat drip on other foods; and cook pork and beef to an internal temperature of 160 degrees, and poultry to 185 degrees. For more information on food handling, call USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline, 1-800-535-4555. **Contact: Susan Conley 720-7390.**

*R-TV Fax: (202) 690-2165
Ag NewsFAX (202) 690-3944*

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA # 1862 -- Following the recent food poisoning outbreak in the Pacific Northwest, industry and government officials plan to upgrade the way meat is produced, sold and prepared. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME # 1344 -- Diet and death; extending the shelf life of brown rice; phone phonies; reclaiming abandoned mines; farmers and IPM. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1854 -- USDA News Highlights; 1993 deficiency payments; avian flu update; U.S. cattle inventory; calves of predetermined gender. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1607 -- Creating a backward gene; virus-proof crops?; computer cotton; restoring the American elm; needle in a haystack. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Thursday, Feb. 18, ag income/finance, farm labor report; Friday, Feb. 19, ag outlook, cattle on feed, honey production; Monday, Feb. 22, livestock and poultry update, ag trade update, catfish processing; Tuesday, Feb. 23, weekly weather and crop, livestock and poultry outlook; Wednesday, Feb. 24, cotton and wool outlook. **These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.**

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on a USDA program to reclaim abandoned strip mines; Lynn Wyvill reports on slow cooker safety, and on USDA's latest dairy production report.

ACTUALITIES -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy talks with reporters at a news briefing in Washington, D.C.; James Donald, USDA outlook chairman, sums up the latest crop report; Norton Strommen, USDA chief meteorologist, with a crop and weather update.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- DeBoria Janifer reports on USDA Extension activities at urban food banks; Lynn Wyvill on ethanol and soy diesel research at USDA laboratories in Peoria, IL; and Pat O'Leary on biotechnology and tomatoes.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update with anchors Eric Parsons and Lori Spiczka. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

THE GRANDADDY OF ALL FARM SHOWS...is the way Jack Crowner (Kentucky Agrinet, Louisville) termed the 28th annual National Farm Machinery Show, February 10-13 in Louisville. Jack and Allen Aldridge covered the event for their listeners. About 400,000 attendees from across the nation attended. They also covered the Tobacco Expo held last month. Jack says tobacco is a billion dollar industry in the state, and is alive and well.

A SHIFT IN WEATHER PATTERNS...has been forecast for the Northwest, says Wey Simpson (KAQQ, Spokane, WA). A meteorologist he interviewed says there are indications the weather could return to that experienced in the '40s and '50s of wetter, cooler conditions. Wey says although there is snow cover the region remains deficient in moisture.

CORN CLASSIC...February 21-23 in San Antonio, TX will be covered by Gary Truitt (AgriAmerica Net, Indianapolis, IN). Gary will be bringing his folding display to broadcast from the site, and a farm family that won an all expense paid trip in a recent contest on the network.

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POTATO CROP...is marketing well, says Bob Burtenshaw (KUPI, Idaho Falls, ID). A smaller crop this season helped prices. Idaho has a major impact on prices, one-third of the annual crop is produced in Bob's area. While the region has received the best snowfall in years, Bob notes that it remains in a moisture deficit. They hope for continued storms this winter.

OHIO PORK EXPO...February 19-20 will be covered live in broadcasts from the event in Dayton, says Chip Nelson (WKFI, Wilmington, OH).

NAMA...and the NAFB Southeast region meeting will fit nicely into travel schedules, says Gary Cooper (Southeast Agrinet, Ocala, FL). Gary is the Southeast VP and says the regional meeting will be in Destin, FL, Apr. 15-17, and NAMA in nearby Orlando, April 19. He extends a big invite to you. Gary says early February is the peak of the fruit and vegetable season in Florida, keeping him busy.

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio & TV Division